



Strange but true

By Anthony Tuck

Easter prompts me to share a strange, mystical experience with you.

I have a book, *God Calling*, that contains a message for every day of the year. The foreword claims that the messages are direct from God and were heard and written down by "Two Listeners" whose identities remain a secret to this day.

I have read the messages, in conjunction with my prayers, for many years. The more I understand their spiritual wisdom, the more convinced I am that they are from God.

One message tells never to pass a beggar by without giving something, because he could be Christ.

My wife Barbara and I have a home in France. It is a long drive and often we stay overnight at Chartres. It was evening the first time we visited the cathedral. I had read that Chartres cathedral was a huge coded message containing many ancient mysteries, the key to which had not yet been discovered.

The bearded beggar

I said a silent prayer for enlightenment as we approached a side door. A bearded beggar stood there. Mindful of the *God Calling* message, I took out our purse. We had not yet used any money. All that was in the purse, left over from a previous trip, was two 20-centimes and two 10-centimes - 60 centimes in all.

Embarrassed at not having more, I handed him the centimes, apologising for the small amount. The beggar, in his mid to late 30's, had a gentle face and beautiful eyes. He said nothing but thanked me with a kindly, genuine smile.

The key

It was near sunset as we entered the cathedral. The cavernous interior, though lighted, was quite dark. Sud-

denly, I felt an inexplicable compulsion to look down at the stone floor. Looking down, I saw to my absolute astonishment, there at my feet exactly where I had stopped, some small bronze-coloured coins . . . two 20-centimes and two 10-centimes - the amount in exactly the same coinage that I had just given to the beggar.

Then, beside the coins, I saw two small keys on a keyring. I showed them to Barbara who was equally astounded. We walked towards the altar where, finding a cathedral official, I handed him the coins and keys.

The bell for closing was rung so we left. I looked for the beggar but he was nowhere to be seen. Shaken, but exalted by the strange experience, we made our way to our hotel.

I know, beyond doubt, that I was truly blessed that evening with a message from God. Not only did he acknowledge our humble gift to the beggar - was he Christ? - but the keys were, I am convinced, a symbolic message confirming that Chartres cathedral is indeed "key" to many ancient esoteric mysteries.

God Calling and *God at Eventide* are available at all church bookshops.

Finchley seeks its National Poet

The National Poetry Anthology is looking for entries for its new edition. Up to 200 winners are selected every year, each one representing a different UK town. All the winners are published in the anthology, and all receive a free copy of the book.

The overall winner also receives the National Poetry Champion Trophy and £100 in books.

Entry is free. Just send three poems (on any subject), up to 20 lines and 160 words each, plus a second class stamp if you want a reply, to United Press Ltd, 44a St James Street, Burnley, BB11 1NQ. The closing date is 30 June 2002.

Although you don't have to fill in an official entry form, the organizers prefer that you do. Forms are available in public libraries, and you can also visit the website at www.upltd.co.uk.



Rangoon at the Ace Café. Photo by Femke van Iperen

Ace Café, Ace Band

by David Hobbs

It was a cold February night, but it was warm inside the Ace Café and Rangoon were stirring up a storm. Fronted by the charismatic Will Hudson, they stormed through a set that brought back memories of early REM or Tom Petty at his peak.

They are tight and solid; Michelle Hariotis on drums and Andy Jack on bass, the twin guitars of John Arnett and Maxim Nicholls and Will Hudson who struts his stuff like he was born to it. They came together in 1999 but they look and sound like they've been doing it for far longer than is healthy.

Rangoon, influenced by everything from rock to jazz, mainly play original material, most of it written by Will. They closed with 'Ace Café' their rousing tribute to the energy and history of the 'Ace'.

Don't dream it, be it

I asked Will how the band came together. He told me that in 1999, because they had shared interests in music, they felt it was about time they put dreams into action. Although now living in East Finchley, Will was born in Singapore and grew up in Australia. John hails from Grimsby, Maxim from Stoke and Michelle from Sydney. 'None of us are teenagers, we've all got jobs and families, but we didn't see why that should stop us'. John is a teacher, Maxim an anaesthetist and Will a community architect.

Rats of Rangoon

The name Rangoon comes

from an early song of Will's, *Rats of Rangoon*. "The song is about my relationship with my father. He was a journalist and was imprisoned by the Japanese in Rangoon jail in 1944. He kept a secret diary which was later published as 'The Rats of Rangoon'". Having decided on the name Rangoon, Will felt that he should contact Amnesty International, "I am committed to the democracy movement in Myanmar (Burma) and I felt that we might be able to help. All our CDs and publicity material carry a message in support of Amnesty and we have played several benefits for them". He feels that the name is a way of keeping support for the pro-democracy movement in Burma alive. Rangoon are playing a benefit for Amnesty International and Mind in Barnet at the Torrington in North Finchley on 18 April, I hope to see you there.

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